



1910 Association Drive  
Reston, Virginia 20191  
703.476.4900  
Fax: 703.860.2713

[natlhdqtrs@fcclainc.org](mailto:natlhdqtrs@fcclainc.org)  
[www.fcclainc.org](http://www.fcclainc.org)

**Testimony of Michael L. Benjamin  
Executive Director  
Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Inc.**

**Before the  
House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet  
Hearing on the “Status of the DTV Transition – Part 2”**

**October 17, 2007**

**2123 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-6115**

**Testimony of Michael L. Benjamin  
Executive Director  
Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Inc.**

**Before the  
House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet**

**Hearing on the “Status of the DTV Transition – Part 2”  
October 17, 2007**

Chairman Markey, Ranking Member Upton, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide you with information about the role that Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) will play in the analog to digital television transition event that will take place on February 17, 2009. In many respects I have come full circle with the Telecommunication Act of 1996 and with your Subcommittee Mr. Chairman. As Executive Director of the Institute for Mental Health Initiatives (IMHI) from 1994-1999, I was responsible for IMHI's collaboration with the National PTA and the University of Wisconsin-Madison in conducting a 1996 national survey of parents concerning their informational needs regarding a TV Ratings System. The survey findings were utilized by the TV Industry Workgroup in developing its TV Parental Guidelines that are still utilized today. As the Executive Director of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), I am pleased to be representing an exemplary youth organization that will be involved in assisting citizens throughout the United States in making the transition from analog to digital television.

## **FCCLA Overview**

FCCLA is a national nonprofit student organization that helps young men and women become strong leaders in families, careers, and communities through Family and Consumer Sciences Education (FACS). Its mission is to promote personal growth and leadership development through FACS. Focusing on the multiple roles of family member, wage earner, and community leader, members develop skills for life through character development, creative and critical thinking, interpersonal communication, practical knowledge, and career preparation.

FCCLA members are students in middle schools and high schools who are taking or have taken a FACS course. These young people are organized by local chapters in school settings. Members develop and lead projects that address important personal, family, career, and societal issues. FACS teachers serve as FCCLA chapter advisers. FCCLA membership is open to students of all races and religious beliefs and can be found in public, private, and home school settings. Based on the 2005-2006 annual membership report, the four membership regions have the following membership percentages:

- 54% Southern
- 32% Central
- 8% Pacific
- 6% North Atlantic

FCCLA involves more than 225,000 students in nearly 7,000 local chapters in all 50 states and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. FCCLA is one of the nation's largest

Career and Technical Student Organizations and is endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

The organization started in Chicago in 1945 when students enrolled in home economics classes and their advisers officially formed Future Homemakers of America (FHA). FHA changed its name to FCCLA in July 1999.

### **FCCLA National Programs**

For over 60 years FCCLA members have been achieving positive student outcomes and success through national programs based on identified community needs. At the heart of FCCLA is student involvement in programs, projects, activities, and events they plan, carry out, and evaluate themselves. Through FCCLA projects—simple or complex, short-term or long-term—members sort out thoughts, analyze situations, set goals, interact with others, apply classroom knowledge, and become leaders in families, careers, and communities. Throughout FCCLA activities chapter members involve community leaders and various collaborative groups. FCCLA programs are frameworks that encompass lessons, learning activities, projects, resources, and recognition for carrying out projects related to a specific topic. Projects may be part of a larger program or may be custom-designed to meet members' needs, interests, and concerns. One example of an FCCLA program that has addressed a youth related concern is STOP the Violence – Students Taking On Prevention. STOP the Violence was created in 1999 following the Paducah, Kentucky school shooting, after the local chapter president was injured. The STOP the Violence program empowers youth with attitudes, skills, and

resources to recognize, report, and reduce youth violence. The program was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention until 2006. From 1999 through 2006, FCCLA has trained 38,651 individuals in 5,921 chapters in this program.

### **“Keep Your TV On” Campaign**

In the new initiative, FCCLA has partnered with the Best Buy Co. Inc. and Geek Squad, and has involved the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) of the Department of Commerce, and other partners, including media outlets, to increase awareness of FCCLA and the Digital Television (DTV) Converter Box Coupon Program. NTIA provided the opportunity for FCCLA to connect with partners involved in the transition. FCCLA’s “Keep Your TV On” campaign was developed to provide chapter advisers (teachers) with the tools necessary to conduct community service projects across the country and in the FACS classroom. Project ideas will be made available to FCCLA advisers to integrate this program into the classroom and by utilizing community organizations. Best Buy Co., Inc. and Geek Squad has provided FCCLA with \$50,000 to be used as incentive awards and publicity for the campaign. Chapters will promote the national transition to digital television and the Commerce Department Converter Box Coupon Program. FCCLA youth leaders will take the lead on this consumer education grassroots effort that will benefit communities nationwide utilizing the Best Buy “blue shirts” and Geek Squad agents where available.

FCCLA will begin promoting the campaign at the 2007 National Cluster Meetings. Each fall, nearly 9,000 students and advisers from FCCLA chapters from all over the country convene at four regional meetings to share ideas, learn about exciting programs offered by FCCLA and develop leadership skills. Best Buy will be presenting a youth workshop at each meeting in the following four locations: Atlanta, Ga., and Buffalo, N.Y. (November 9-11) Denver, Co., and Minneapolis, Minn., (Nov. 16-18).

Following the campaign kick off in January 2008, “Keep Your TV On” awards will be given out each month between January and May. Each month up to 10 chapters will receive \$500 gift cards from Best Buy. In June all national winners will be enrolled in a grand prize contest of \$3,000. The contest and campaign will be highlighted in FCCLA publications, such as, *Teen Times*, the national bimonthly magazine that is distributed to all 225,000 members and *The Adviser*, the national biannual newsletter for teachers that includes up-to-date chapter management information and at regional meetings.

### **Summary**

FCCLA is involving youth across the country in community engagement by doing its part to help raise awareness of the analog to digital transition and the Converter Box Coupon Program. We appreciate the opportunity to appear before this Subcommittee and provide this update on “Status of the DTV Transition – Part 2.” Please let us know how we can connect you with our members in your district. Thank you.